



Ten keys to happier living

Ten factors that are really important for our well-being and what we can do about them

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

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ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Join the movement. Be the change

We all want to lead a happy life and want the people we love to be happy too. But as a society we are not giving this enough priority. Despite decades of economic growth we are no happier now than we were sixty years ago. We need to re-think our priorities.

The good news is that our actions and choices can affect our happiness. What makes us happy has less to do with our money or possessions and more to do with our attitudes and relationships with other people.



Action for Happiness is a movement of people from all walks of life who are taking action in their personal lives, communities, workplaces and schools to help create a happier and more caring society.

We help people learn practical ways to increase their well-being and make others happier too, all based on the latest scientific evidence of what really works. You can start with these Ten keys to happier living.

A happier world is possible. Your actions really make a difference.

“I will try to create more happiness and less unhappiness in the world around me”

The Action for Happiness pledge



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GREAT DREAM

Ten keys to happier living

GIVING



Do things for others

RELATING



Connect with people

EXERCISING



Take care of your body

AWARENESS



Live life mindfully

TRYING OUT



Keep learning new things

DIRECTION



Have goals to look forward to

RESILIENCE



Find ways to bounce back

EMOTIONS



Look for what's good

ACCEPTANCE



Be comfortable with who you are

MEANING



Be part of something bigger

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if you want to

FEEL
GOOD

do good



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



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GIVING

Do things for others



Caring about others is fundamental to our happiness. Helping other people is not only good for them, it's good for us too. It makes us happier and can help to improve our health. Giving also creates stronger connections between people and helps to build a happier society for everyone. And it's not all about money - we can also give our time, ideas and energy. So if you want to feel good, do good!

QUESTION



What have you done recently to make someone happy or to help others?

INSPIRATION

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted” ~ Aesop


ACTION IDEAS

- Do three extra acts of kindness today. Offer to help, give away your change, pay a compliment, or make someone smile.
- Reach out to help someone who's struggling. Give them a call or offer your support. Let them know you care.

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Do things for others
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The background of the entire page is a light blue sky with several white, fluffy clouds. A network of dotted green lines connects various groups of people, forming a web-like structure. The groups include: an elderly couple with a white dog in the top left; a woman holding a baby in the top right; a man in a suit and a woman with a child in the center; a woman in a blue skirt and a black cat in the middle right; a woman in a pink coat and a child in the bottom right; a person in a wheelchair being assisted by another person in the bottom left; a man in a suit in the middle left; and a woman in a yellow top and blue skirt in the middle right. The text "When we're together" is written in a large, cursive, yellow rope-like font across the top half of the image.

When we're together

everything's better

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



Connect with people
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RELATING

Connect with people



Our relationships with other people are the most important thing for our happiness. People with strong relationships are happier, healthier and live longer. Our close relationships with family and friends provide love, meaning, support and increase our feelings of self worth. Our broader social networks bring a sense of belonging. So it's vital that we take action to strengthen our relationships and make new connections.

QUESTION



What helps you stay close to the people that really matter?

INSPIRATION

“ People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel ” ~ Maya Angelou

ACTION IDEAS

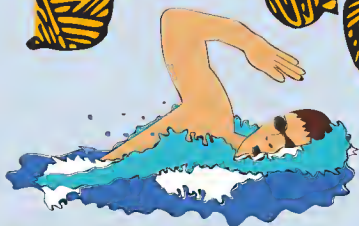
- Make more time for the people who matter. Chat with a loved one or friend, call your parents or play with the kids.
- Make three extra connections today. Stop to chat in the shop, wave at a neighbour, learn the name of someone new.

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Connect with people
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be active



RELAX



REPEAT DAILY



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



Take care of your body
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EXERCISING

Take care of your body



Our body and mind are connected. Being active makes us happier as well as being good for our physical health. It instantly improves our mood and can even lift us out of a depression. We don't all have to run marathons - there are simple things we can do to be more active each day. We can also boost our well-being by spending time outdoors, eating healthily, unplugging from technology and getting enough sleep!

QUESTION



Which ways of being active and healthy do you really enjoy?

INSPIRATION

“Try to limit your sitting and sleeping to just 23 and a half hours a day” ~ Dr Mike Evans

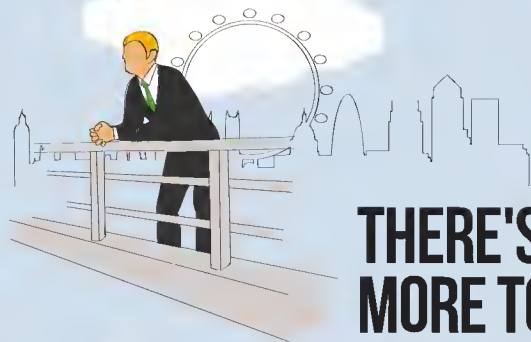
ACTION IDEAS

- Be more active today. Get off a bus a stop early, take the stairs, turn off the TV, go for a walk - anything that gets you moving.
- Eat nutritious food, drink more water, catch up on sleep. Notice which healthy actions lift your mood and do more of them.

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



Take care of your body
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THERE'S MORE TO **LIFE**

when you stop and

NOTICE



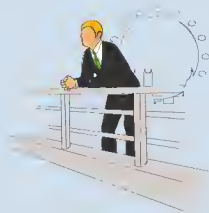
ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Live life mindfully
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AWARENESS

Live life mindfully



Have you ever felt there must be more to life? Well good news, there is! And it's right here in front of us. We just need to stop and take notice. Learning to be more mindful and aware does wonders for our well-being, whether it's on our walk to work, the way we eat or in our relationships. It helps us get in tune with our feelings and stops us dwelling on the past or worrying about the future - so we get more out of the day-to-day.

QUESTION



What do you notice about where you are and how you feel right now?

INSPIRATION

“ Learning how to be still, to really be still and let life happen - that stillness becomes a radiance ” ~ Morgan Freeman

ACTION IDEAS

- Give yourself a bit of head space. At least once a day, stop and take 5 minutes to just breathe and be in the moment.
- Notice and appreciate good things around you every day, big or small. Trees, bird song, the smell of coffee, laughter perhaps?

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



Live life mindfully
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Find time to

lose
yourself



IN WHAT
YOU LOVE



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Keep learning new things
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TRYING OUT

Keep learning new things



Learning affects our well-being in lots of positive ways. It exposes us to new ideas and helps us stay curious and engaged. It also gives us a sense of accomplishment and helps boost our self-confidence and resilience. There are many ways to learn new things throughout our lives, not just through formal qualifications. We can share a skill with friends, join a club, learn to sing, play a new sport and so much more.

QUESTION



What have you learnt or tried out for the first time recently?

INSPIRATION

“ As long as you live, keep learning how to live ” ~ Seneca

ACTION IDEAS

- Do something for the first time today. Sample sushi, try a new route, read a different newspaper or visit a local place of interest.
- Learn a new skill, however small. A first aid technique or a new feature on your phone. Cook a new meal or use a new word.

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Keep learning new things
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it helps to
know what
**YOU'RE LOOKING
FORWARD TO**

SEE NEW THINGS

GOOD HEALTH

REWARDING JOB

FAMILY AND FRIENDS



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Have goals to look forward to
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DIRECTION

Have goals to look forward to



Feeling good about the future is really important for our happiness. We all need goals to motivate us and these have to be challenging enough to excite us, but also achievable. If we try to attempt the impossible this creates unnecessary stress. Choosing meaningful but realistic goals gives our lives direction and brings a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when we achieve them.

QUESTION



What is your most important goal over the next six months?

INSPIRATION

“ A wise person knows which goals are ultimately fulfilling and which offer only the illusion of fulfilment ” ~ Robert Emmons

ACTION IDEAS

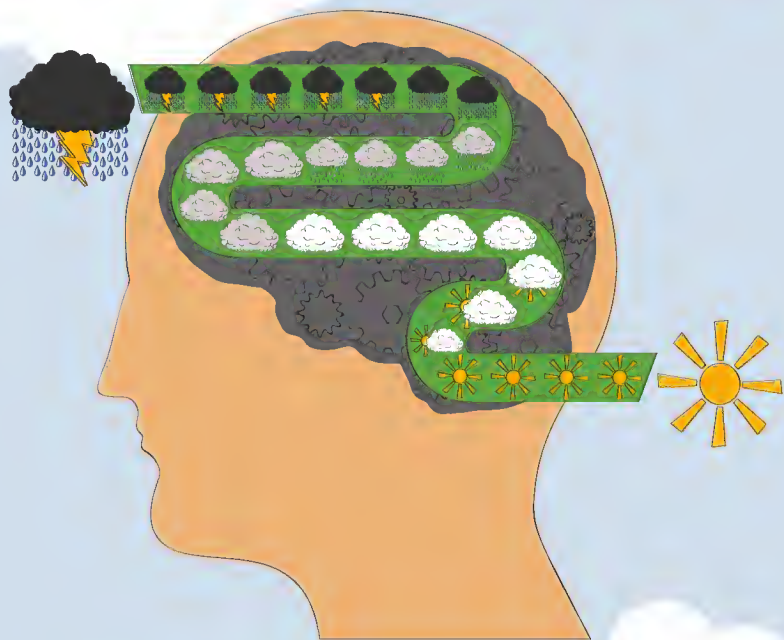
- Take the first step. Think of a goal you're aiming for and do one thing to get started. Make a call, fill in that form, tell others.
- Share your dreams. Tell 3 people about an aspiration that is really important to you this year and listen to theirs too.

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Have goals to look forward to
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If you can't **CHANGE** it,



change the way you
THINK about it

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

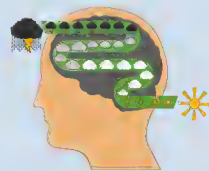


Find ways to bounce back
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RESILIENCE

Find ways to bounce back



All of us have times of stress, loss, failure or trauma in our lives. How we respond to these events has a big impact on our well-being. We often cannot choose what happens to us, but we can choose how we react to what happens. In practice it's not always easy, but one of the most exciting findings from recent research is that resilience, like many other life skills, can be learned.

QUESTION



What has helped you bounce back from difficult times before?

INSPIRATION

“ Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms: to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances ” ~ Viktor Frankl

ACTION IDEAS

- Ask for help today. Confide in a friend, talk to an expert, reach out to a colleague, ask a neighbour to lend a hand.
- When something is troubling you, do something you really enjoy. Shift your mood and bring a new perspective on the problem.

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



Find ways to bounce back
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SEE LIFE AS IT IS, BUT

FOCUS ON THE GOOD BITS



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



Look for what's good
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EMOTIONS

Look for what's good



Positive emotions - like joy, gratitude, contentment, inspiration, and pride - don't just feel good when we experience them. They also help us perform better, broaden our perception, increase our resilience and improve our physical health. So although we need to be realistic about life's ups and downs, it helps to focus on the good aspects of any situation - the glass half full rather than the glass half empty.

QUESTION



What good things have happened in your life recently?

INSPIRATION

“Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you'll look back and realise they were big things” ~ Robert Brault

ACTION IDEAS

- Do something that you know will make you feel good. Listen to music, watch something funny, get outside or call an old friend.
- Try to smile and say something positive every time you walk into a room. Notice the reaction you get.

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Look for what's good
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Don't compare your
insides



with other people's
outsides

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Be comfortable with who you are
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ACCEPTANCE

Be comfortable with who you are



No-one's perfect. But so often we compare a negative view of ourselves with an unrealistic view of other people. Dwelling on our flaws - what we're not rather than what we've got - makes it much harder to be happy. Learning to accept ourselves, warts and all, and being kinder to ourselves when things go wrong, increases our enjoyment of life, our resilience and our well-being. It also helps us accept others as they are.

QUESTION



What are your greatest strengths or hidden talents?

INSPIRATION

“ Friendship with oneself is all important, because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world ” ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

ACTION IDEAS

- Ask a trusted friend or colleague to tell you what they think your real strengths are. Try to make more use of these.
- Be as kind to yourself as you are to others. See your mistakes as opportunities to learn. Notice things you do well, however small.

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THE MEANING OF LIFE



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Be part of something bigger
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MEANING

Be part of something bigger



People who have meaning and purpose in their lives are happier, feel more in control and get more out of what they do. They also experience less stress, anxiety and depression. But where do we find meaning and purpose? It might come from doing a job that makes a difference, our religious or spiritual beliefs, or our family. The answers vary for each of us but they all involve being connected to something bigger than ourselves.

QUESTION



Which aspects of your life give you a real sense of purpose?

INSPIRATION

“Act as if what you do makes a difference.
It does” ~ William James

ACTION IDEAS

- Feel part of something bigger. Spend time with children, visit an inspiring location, gaze at the stars or join a club.
- Be more charitable. Give others your time, offer to help neighbours or friends, consider giving blood or volunteering.

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



Be part of something bigger
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USING THE TEN KEYS

Taking practical action in our daily lives

There are lots of practical ways to use the Ten Keys to Happier Living in our everyday lives. Here are a few suggestions, but you will probably have lots of other great ideas too.

If you'd like any more information on any of these, please visit our website or get in touch at info@actionforhappiness.org

For yourself

Use the Ten Keys to recognise what you already do that is good for your happiness. Try to build more of these ideas into your approach to life and day-to-day choices.



In an Action for Happiness Group

Set up or join a local Action for Happiness group and get together with others who want to help create more happiness and less misery in the world around. Use the Ten Keys as the basis for learning, sharing ideas and taking practical action together.



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Where you live

Share the Ten Keys with loved ones, friends and neighbours and use them to think about ways to improve well-being in your family and community together. Look for practical and fun steps that could make a difference and help make your home and local area a happier and more connected place to live.



At work

Use the Ten Keys to recognise how your work influences your happiness and how your behaviour affects colleagues, customers and others that you interact with. As a manager, use the Ten Keys to identify practical changes to create a happier team environment. Share them with colleagues and get their ideas too.



At school

As a teacher, use the Ten Keys as the basis for classroom discussions or school projects. As a student, suggest them as a topic to study. As parent, governor or someone else who cares about the school community, encourage the leadership team to make well-being a priority and suggest the Ten Keys as a starting point.



Selected References

The Ten Keys to Happier Living are based on the latest scientific evidence about what enables well-being.



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Note: the first five of the Ten Keys are adapted from nef (2008) Five Ways to Wellbeing, part of the UK Government Foresight Report on Mental Capital and Wellbeing.

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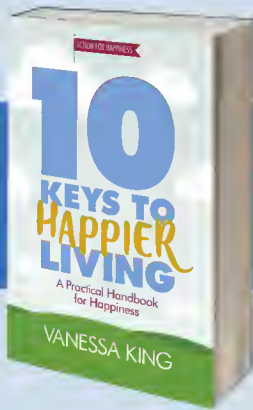
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“ Happiness is a deep sense of flourishing, not a mere pleasurable feeling or fleeting emotion but an optimal state of being ” ~ Matthieu Ricard



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Join the movement. Be the change

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

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